# Authentic Leadership, Psychological Capital and New Graduate Nurses' Mental Health and Job Turnover Intentions: A Comparison of the Mediating Effects of Burnout and Engagement

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# A tale of two new graduate nurses…

Jane

Mary

# Background

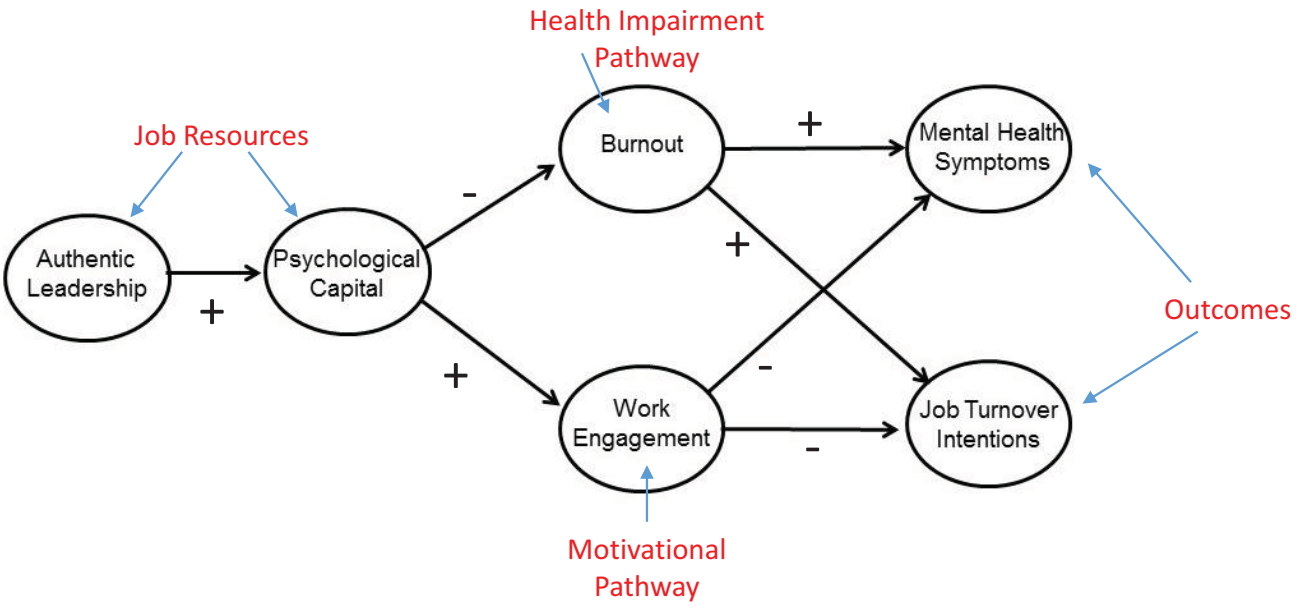
- Training and retention of new nurses is an important priority (WHO 2006; 2012)

- Burnout and work engagement influence new graduate nurse wellbeing and retention

- Early career burnout associated with negative outcomes:
  - Poor mental health (Laschinger & Leiter, 2006)
  - Job and career dissatisfaction
  - Intent to leave (Laschinger et al., 2010; Laschinger & Grau, 2012)

- Work engagement linked to positive outcomes:
  - Organizational commitment (Cho et al., 2006)
  - Job satisfaction (Giallonardo et al., 2010)
  - Reduced intent to leave (Laschinger, 2012)

# Hypothesized Model



# Key Concepts

# 1. Authentic Leadership

- Focuses on building genuine relationships and development of followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005)

- Four key behaviours characteristic of authentic leaders:

1. Self-awareness
2. Transparency
3. Balanced decision making
4. Moral & ethical behaviour

# 2. Psychological Capital

- Refers to intrapersonal resources of hope, resiliency, optimism, and self-efficacy that can be drawn upon to handle challenges successfully (Luthens et al., 2007)

1. Hope
2. Optimism
3. Resiliency
4. Self-efficacy

# 3. Burnout

- Negative psychological syndrome characterized by:

Emotional Exhaustion

Cynicism

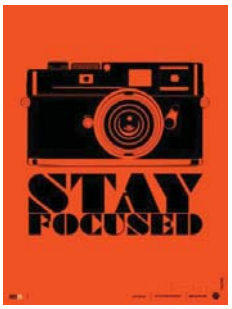
Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001

# 4. Work Engagement

- Positive work-related state of fulfillment characterized by feelings of:

Vigour

Dedication




Absorption

(Bakker et al., 2008)

# 5. Mental Health Symptoms

Ware & Gandek, 1994)

# 6. Turnover Intentions

Kelloway et al., 1999

# Research Questions

1. What is the influence of nurse manager authentic leadership on new graduate nurses' psychological capital?

2. Does psychological capital influence burnout and work engagement?

3. What are the effects of burnout and engagement on mental health symptoms and job turnover intentions?

4. How do the effects of burnout and engagement compare?

# Methods – Design & Sample

- Cross-sectional survey study
- Dillman (2011) protocol for mail surveys

- Random sample of 253 registered nurses (RNs) from CNO registry
- Inclusion criteria:
  - <2 years of RN experience
  - acute care setting providing direct patient care

# Participant Profile

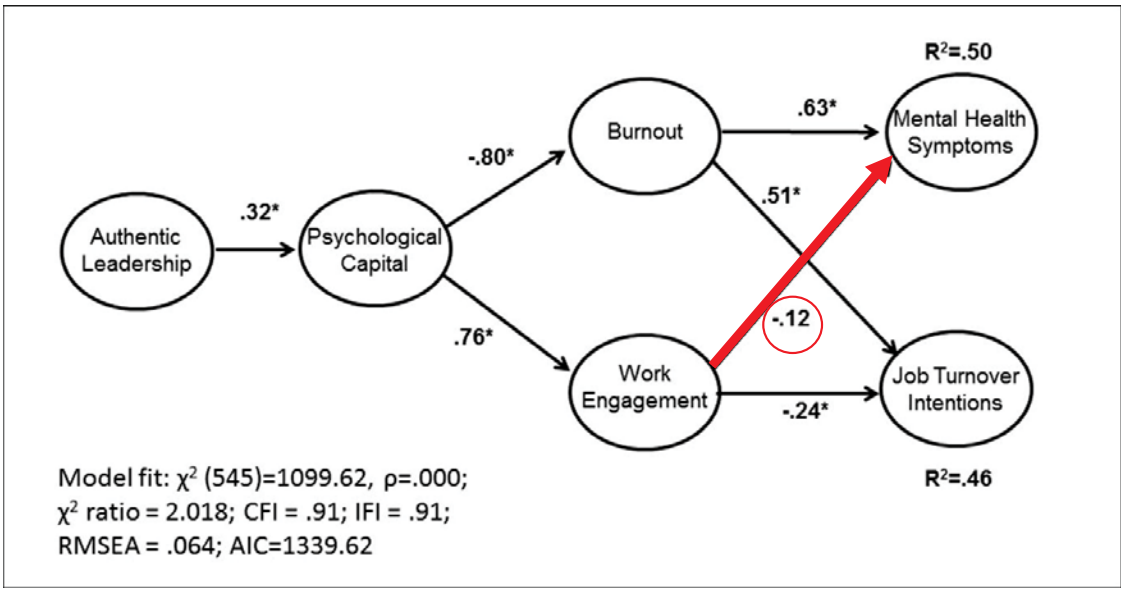
- Mostly female (87.7%) with a BScN (100%)
- Full-time (62.8%) or part-time (31.6%)
- Medical/surgical (54.2%) or critical care (21.3%) units
- Mean age 27.05
- Mean years of nursing experience 0.68 (about 8 months)

# Instruments

| Variable | Instrument | Authors | # of items | Scale Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Authentic Leadership | Authentic Leadership Questionnaire | Walumbwa et al., 2008 | 16 | 0 = not at all to 4 = frequently, if not always |
| Psychological Capital | Psychological Capital Questionnaire | Luthans et al., 2007 | 24 | 1= strongly disagree to 6 = strongly disagree |
| Burnout | Maslach Burnout Inventory Exhaustion & Cynicism | Schaufeli et al., 1996 | 10 | 0 = never to 6 = daily |
| Work Engagement | Utrecht Work Engagement Scale | Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003 | 9 | 0= never to 6 = always |
| Mental Health Symptoms | Mental Health Inventory-5 | Ware et al., 2000 | 5 | 1 = all of the time to 6 = none of the time |
| Job Turnover Intentions | Job Turnover Intentions Scale | Kelloway et al., 1999 | 3 | 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree |

# Model 1 Results
## (Burnout AND Work Engagement)

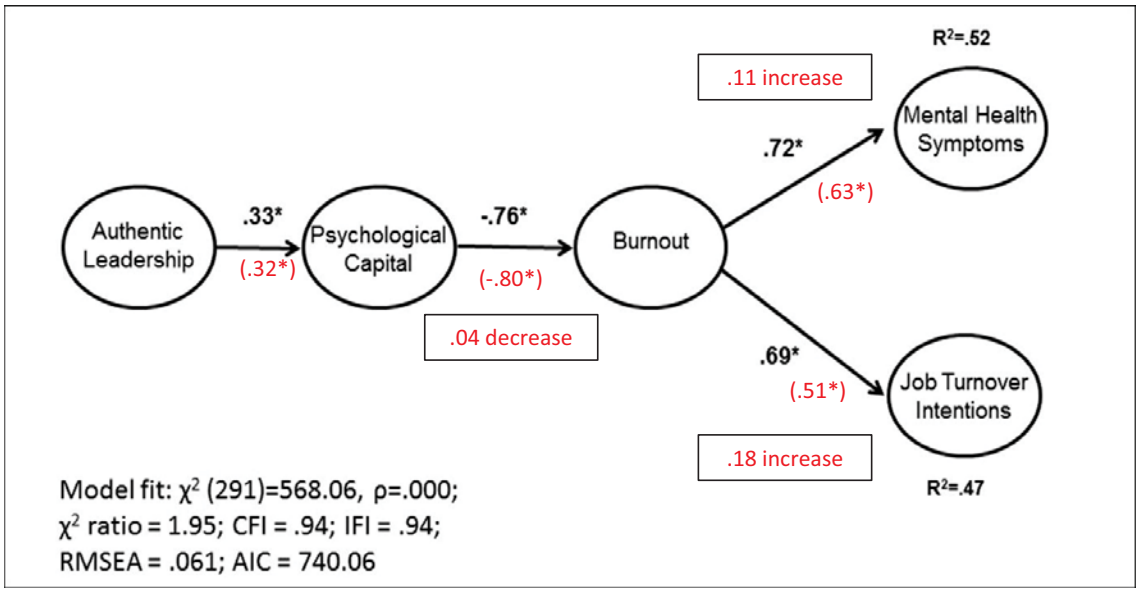
# Effects of Authentic Leadership and Psychological Capital on Burnout, Engagement, and Subsequent Outcomes



Now let’s see what happens when we look at **burnout** by itself…

Model 2 Results

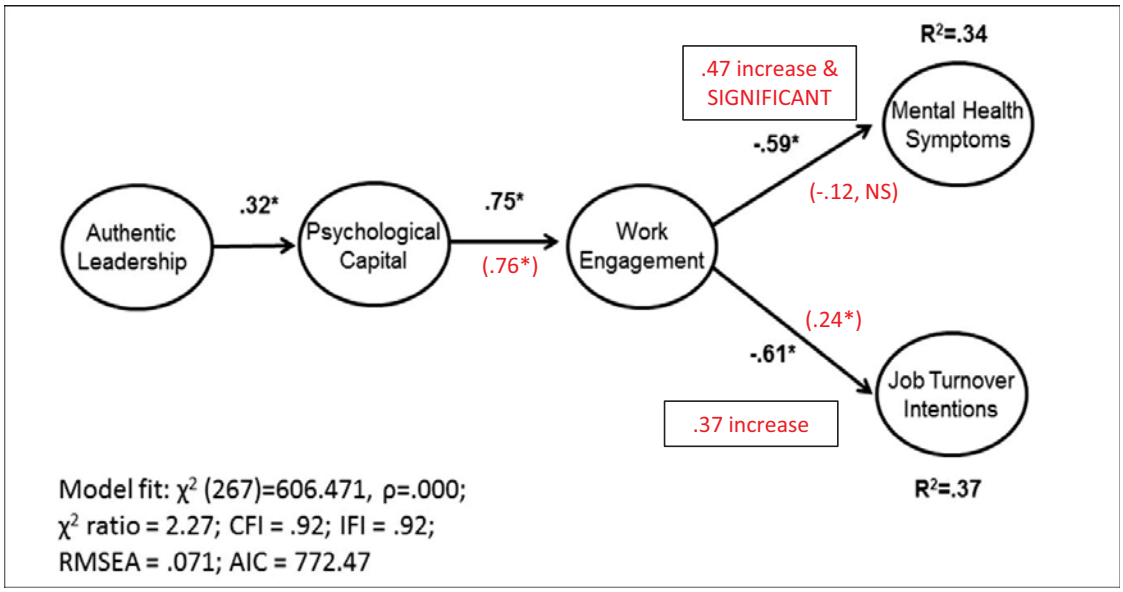
# Alternative model with burnout only



Now let’s see what happens when we look at **work engagement** by itself…

Model 3 Results

# Alternative model with engagement only



# Which model was the best?

| | Model 1 Burnout & Engagement | Model 2 Burnout only | Model 3 Engagement only |
|---|---|---|---|
| **df** | 545 | 291 | 267 |
| **$\chi^2$** | 1099.617 | 568.057 | 606.471 |
| **$\chi^2$ ratio** | 2.018 | 1.952 | 2.271 |
| **CFI** | .914 | .938 | .916 |
| **IFI** | .914 | .939 | .917 |
| **RMSEA** | .064 | .061 | .071 |
| **AIC** | 1339.617 | **740.057** | 772.471 |

**Recall:**

1. $X^2$: not significant
2. $\chi^2$ ratio: <3
3. CFI: >.90
4. IFI: >.90
5. RMSEA: <.08

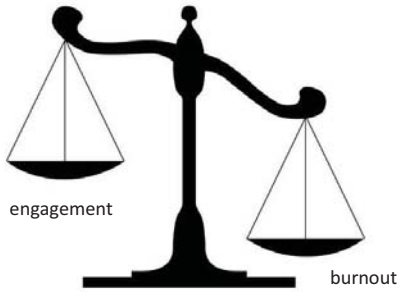
# Discussion - Burnout

- Burnout had a strong negative effect on new nurses' mental health symptoms and increased intention to leave their jobs, regardless of work engagement

- Burnout was a better predictor of new graduate nurses' mental health symptoms and intent to leave in this study

# Discussion – Work Engagement

- Work engagement -> decreased job turnover intentions, regardless of burnout
- Work engagement only had a significant protective effect on mental health symptoms in the **absence** of burnout
  - In other words, when burnout was present it overpowered the effect of work engagement on mental health symptoms
- Therefore **burnout prevention** may be more important than engagement for protecting new nurses' mental health and job retention.



## Implications: Leadership & Psychological Capital

- Our results provide empirical support that managers' authentic leadership behaviour helps new graduate nurses:
  - Directly build intrapersonal resources (psychological capital)
  - And by doing so leaders…
    - foster work engagement
    - help prevent burnout
    - reduce mental health symptoms
    - reduce job turnover intentions

## How might we build psychological capital through authentic leadership?

- Role modelling (lead by example)
- Develop honest, open relationships with new graduate nurses
- Help new graduate nurses accurately examine their strengths and weaknesses, set realistic goals, and celebrate accomplishments
- Ask for feedback and involvement
- Give feedback that is specific, accurate, timely, and helpful

Wang et al., 2014; Woolley et al., 2011

# Final Thought…

# THANK YOU…

- Nursing Leadership Network of Ontario
- Dr. Heather Laschinger, PhD, RN, FAAN, FCAHS
- Survey participants
- My son Liam (the boss)

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Western HealthSciences

IRENE E. NORDWICH FOUNDATION

Western NURSING 1920-2010 CELEBRATING NINETY YEARS

Ontario Graduate Scholarship

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